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# The Party Politics of Legislative-Executive Relations in Security and Defence Policy

Wagner, Wolfgang, Anna Herranz-Surralles, Juliet Kaarbo, and Falk Ostermann

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*The move from territorial defence to 'wars of choice' has influenced the domestic politics of military interventions. This paper examines the extent to which both the substance and the procedure of military interventions are contested among political parties. Regarding the substance, our analysis of Chapel Hill Expert Survey data demonstrates that across European states political parties on the right are more supportive of military missions than those on the left. On the decision-making procedures, our case studies of Germany, France, Spain and the United Kingdom show that political parties on the left tend to favour strong parliamentary control whereas those on the right tend to prefer an unconstrained executive, although with differences across countries. These findings challenge the view that 'politics stops at the water's edge' and contribute to a greater understanding of how political parties and parliaments influence military interventions.*

**Keywords:** parliament; legislative-executive relations; military missions; political parties;

## Introduction

Throughout Europe, the move from territorial defence to ‘wars of choice’ (Freedman 2005: 98) has influenced the domestic politics of military interventions. With the survival of the state not at threat, the political and procedural legitimacy of waging wars of choice may develop as the centre stage of domestic political contestation. This contestation can occur in the general public, as leaders need to make their case for the legitimacy of the use of force. But contestation may also occur surrounding the typically strong executive prerogatives in engaging armed force, and the role that parliaments have in constraining executives.

Political parties sit at the centre of this contestation as they represent the public in the general political debate and the parliament in executive-legislative relations. Although scholarship discussing party positions on specific missions and/or individual countries is abundant (e.g. Kaarbo and Kenealy 2016; Strong 2014; Rathbun 2004), there is very little systematic and comparative analysis of party political preferences on the use of force and legislative-executive relations in security policies. In this article, we examine the extent to which both the *substance* and the *procedure* of military interventions have been contested among political parties. Using quantitative and qualitative evidence, we show that the left/right axis captures the differences across political parties on both dimensions, although the national context partially qualifies the effect of party politics.

The article proceeds in four steps. Section one reviews various explanations for why political parties disagree about military interventions rather than sharing a cross-party notion of the ‘national interest’. It presents alternative propositions on the main axes of political contestation. Section two examines the plausibility of these expectations by analysing data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey on party positioning, which covers parties from 28 European countries (Bakker *et al.* 2015). Section three turns to the politics of legislative-executive relations in decision-making procedures on the use of armed force by examining the party politics of legislative-executive relations in Germany, Spain, France and the United Kingdom (UK) in depth. These four countries have played important roles in military missions but represent different constitutional traditions and political-strategic cultures. The final section recaps the main findings and argues further that despite the country-specific differences, the domestic politics of military interventions cannot be fully explained without taking into account the effect of party politics along a left/right axis. Overall, this article argues that, contrary to the commonly held assumption that ‘politics stops at the water’s

edge', the role of parliaments in foreign policy (the subject of this Special Issue) is very much a point of ideological contestation among political parties.

### **The Party Politics of Military Missions**

Political parties emerged in response to social conflict (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In most democracies, cultural cleavages have been less influential than a socio-economic one that has pitted leftist against rightist parties. The former are characterized as more –'inclusive', 'egalitarian' and as having sympathies for a strong role for the state in the economy. The opposite holds for rightist parties. Subsequent social conflicts, e.g. over the environment, have mostly been accommodated by existing cleavages (Kriesi *et al.* 2006). The left/right typology has also been used to characterize foreign policy positions, despite the assumption in much International Relations scholarship that domestic actors, such as political parties, have a consensus on one national interest. Left parties are considered to be 'dovish' in contrast to 'hawkish' right parties. Such general profiles are confirmed in studies of election manifestos. Klingemann *et al.* (1994), for example, find that right parties are considered to be 'pro-military' whereas left parties are 'anti-military' and 'pro-peace'. However, when it comes to the actual propensity to use armed force abroad, the literature is less conclusive.

Students of political parties and security policy have suggested three rationales for why political parties differ on military missions. First, foreign policies may impact *domestic policy programs* because they compete for the same resources. For this reason, Koch and Sullivan (2010: 619) argue that parties that promote the welfare state tend to oppose large armies, expensive military procurement as well as the actual use of armed force abroad.

Second, political parties may have genuine *foreign policy differences* that have no discernible link to domestic politics. For example, Brian Rathbun (2004: 19) argues that some parties believe in what Robert Jervis called the 'deterrence' model of international politics whereas others subscribe to what he dubbed the 'spiral' model. According to the former, interests are best guarded by military strength and resolve; in contrast, the latter stresses empathy and 'security dilemma sensitivity' (Jervis 1976). Whereas the former translates into more 'hawkish' policies, the latter implies more 'dovish' ones.

Third, foreign policies may result from the same core *values and principled beliefs* that also inspire domestic policies. Rathbun suggests that liberty and equality are such core values and that 'partisan debates can generally be reduced to fundamental disputes about the importance of equality and liberty, whether at home or abroad' (2004: 2). For example,

parties emphasizing equality are concerned about minorities and the underprivileged and thus favour the welfare state as well as interventions on behalf of minorities and underprivileged abroad.

The expectations of the three rationales are therefore partly conflicting. Whereas the first two rationales suggest support for military missions to be stronger among right parties than left parties, the third rationale adds an important qualification: if force is used for humanitarian purpose, rather than self-defence, left parties may be more supportive than right parties (cf. Born and Hänggi 2005: 11). Anecdotal evidence includes the interventionism of Bill Clinton's Democrats as well as Tony Blair's Labour Party.

At the same time, previous research on the influence of a government's left/right orientation on the propensity to use military force has proceeded on the assumption that the relation would be linear (see, for example, Palmer *et al.* 2004). However, it is not obvious that a far right political party would be more supportive of military missions than a conservative or Christian-Democratic party. The former may score higher on a general preparedness to use military force but it may also be more hesitant to use such force for any goal other than territorial defence (see the country studies in Liang 2007).

Finally, 'wars of choice' may even transcend the left/right logic entirely. If military force is purportedly used to 'save strangers' (Wheeler 2000) from state-sponsored violence (as in Kosovo 1999 and in Libya 2011), to topple a dictatorship (as in Iraq in 2003) or to support a state and nation-building process (as in Afghanistan from 2001 on), the justifications resonate with 'post-materialist' values that are characteristic of a cultural cleavage, rather than the socio-economic one. In exploring this alternative hypothesis, we make use of the new politics dimension, conceptualized by Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks and Carole Wilson (2002) that ranges from 'green/alternative/libertarian' (GAL) to 'traditional/authoritarian/nationalist' (TAN) party positions. For example, this GAL/TAN scale is found to capture the structure of contestation on European integration better than the traditional left-right scale (*Ibid*).

In sum, although previous research has addressed the ideological dimension of political parties' positions on interventions, theoretical expectations about the effect of party-political cleavages differ and there are few cross-country systematic comparisons. A broader investigation is necessary to assess the different rationales for parties' positions on military interventions, as modern 'wars of choice' complicate parties' positioning on these choices.

## Mapping Political Parties' Positions on Military Missions

The positions of political parties have been studied and coded in a series of datasets. The most widely used dataset is provided by the Manifesto Project (Volkens *et al.* 2015). Even though this dataset includes variables to code parties' positions on 'the military', 'peace' and 'internationalism', it does not include a measure of whether parties support their country's participation in military missions. In contrast, the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) included such a question in its 2010 survey.<sup>1</sup> In that round, more than 1.000 experts were asked to place 237 political parties from 28 European states<sup>2</sup> on various issues and ideological dimensions.<sup>3</sup>

In this section, we use the data collected by the CHES to map the position of political parties on military missions and to correlate them with their value on a left/right scale, on the one hand, and on a GAL/TAN scale, on the other hand.<sup>4</sup> In addition, we draw on the notion of party families to cluster parties into groups with shared core values and interests and to examine whether there are significant differences across party families. However, not all party families are of equal weight, especially not in the countries we study in more depth. For the subsequent analysis, therefore, we exclude the 'Confessional/Protestant', 'Agrarian' and 'Regionalist/Ethnic' party families as well as all parties that are coded as not belonging to any family. Furthermore, we merged the party families 'Conservatives' and 'Christian Democrats' into one category because they occupy comparable positions on both the left-right scale as well as on military missions and they do not compete with each other in any of the countries studied in depth below. For most parts of our analysis, therefore, we zoom in on the differences between the main party families, namely *Conservatives/Christian Democrats*, *Socialists*, *Liberals*, *Greens*, *Radical Left* and *Radical Right*.

Figures 1 and 2 visualize the correlation between political parties' support for peace and security missions and their position on a left/right and a GAL/TAN axis respectively. Showing the positions of 237 political parties in 28 European countries, the scatterplots demonstrate that peace and security missions are highly contested. Considerable numbers of parties can be found amongst the supporters (6 and above on the y-axis) as well as amongst the opponents (4 and below on the y-axis). In both cases, the correlations are curvilinear.<sup>5</sup>

With a view to the left/right axis, support for peace and security missions is lowest at the far left. It grows as one moves to the centre-left and reaches its peak at the centre right.

Support then declines again as one moves to the far right, although this support is higher than at the far left.

FIGURE 1  
MAPPING OF POLITICAL PARTIES' POSITIONS ON MILITARY MISSIONS ON A LEFT/RIGHT-SCALE  
(WITH 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVALS)

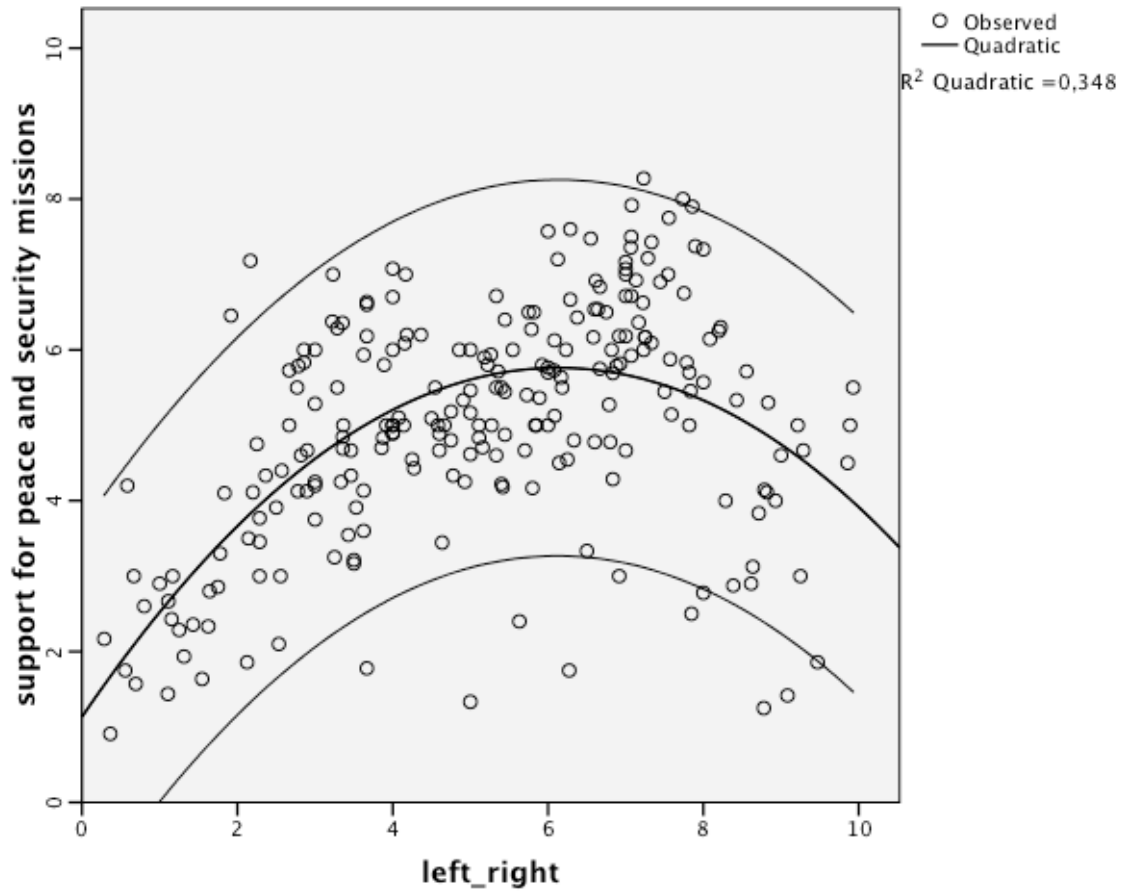
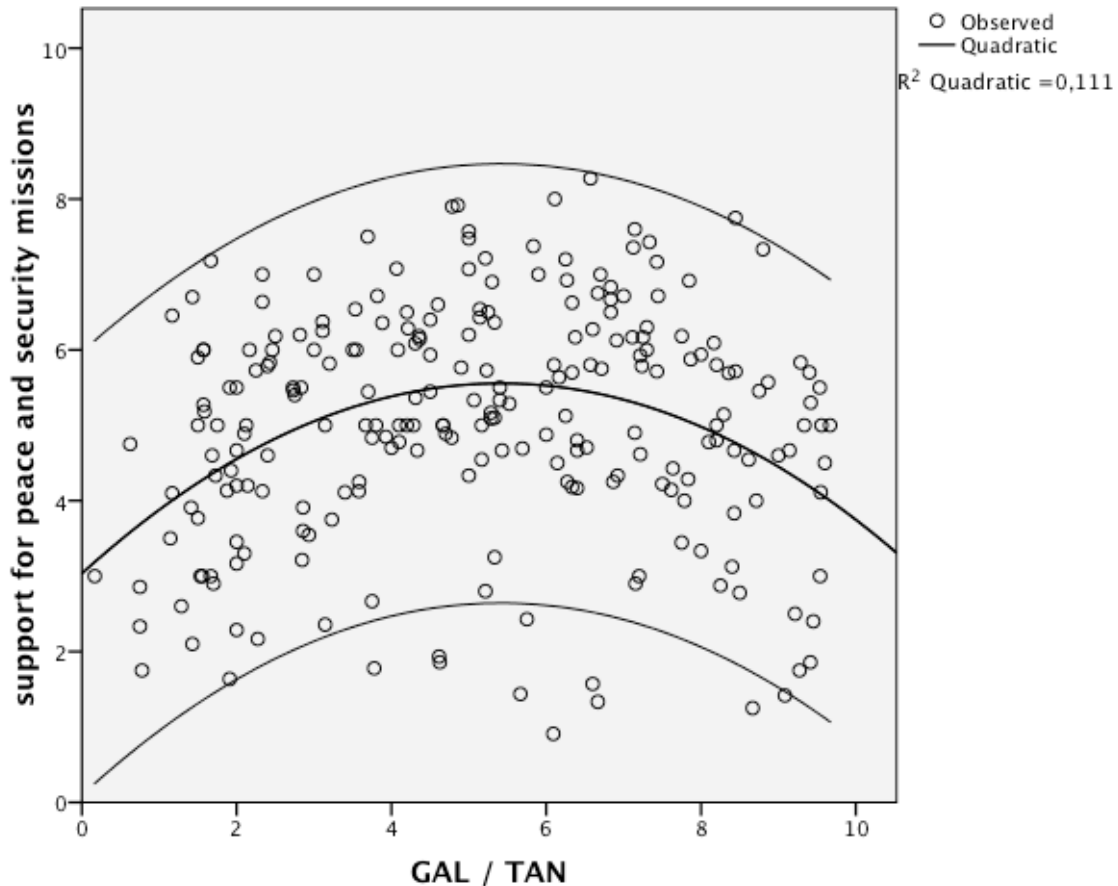


FIGURE 2  
MAPPING OF POLITICAL PARTIES' POSITIONS ON MILITARY MISSIONS ON A GAL/TAN-SCALE (WITH 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVALS)



$p = 0.000$

Figure 2 shows that the correlation between support for military missions and a party's position on the GAL/TAN axis is also curvilinear, i.e. support is highest at the centre and declines towards both ends. In other words, both political parties that are very green/alternative/libertarian and those that are very traditional/authoritarian/nationalist tend to oppose peace and security missions.

Although both correlations are statistically significant at the 0,001 level, the left/right variable can explain a higher share in the variation among political parties' positions on peace and security missions:  $r^2$  for left/right is 0,43 compared to 0,12 for GAL/TAN. Furthermore, even though the GAL/TAN axis is significantly correlated to parties' positions on military missions, the curvilinear relation does not confirm the theoretical expectations outlined above:



Parties were expected to be the more supportive of using force to ‘save strangers’ the more they are green/alternative/libertarian. Instead, the CHES data suggest that high scores on GAL tend to correspond with low support for military missions. From a theoretical point, it is unclear why support for a new use of military force is highest among political parties that occupy a neutral position on a scale that is designed to capture contestation over new politics issues.

FIGURE 3  
BOXPLOT OF PARTY FAMILIES’ SUPPORT FOR PEACE AND SECURITY MISSIONS

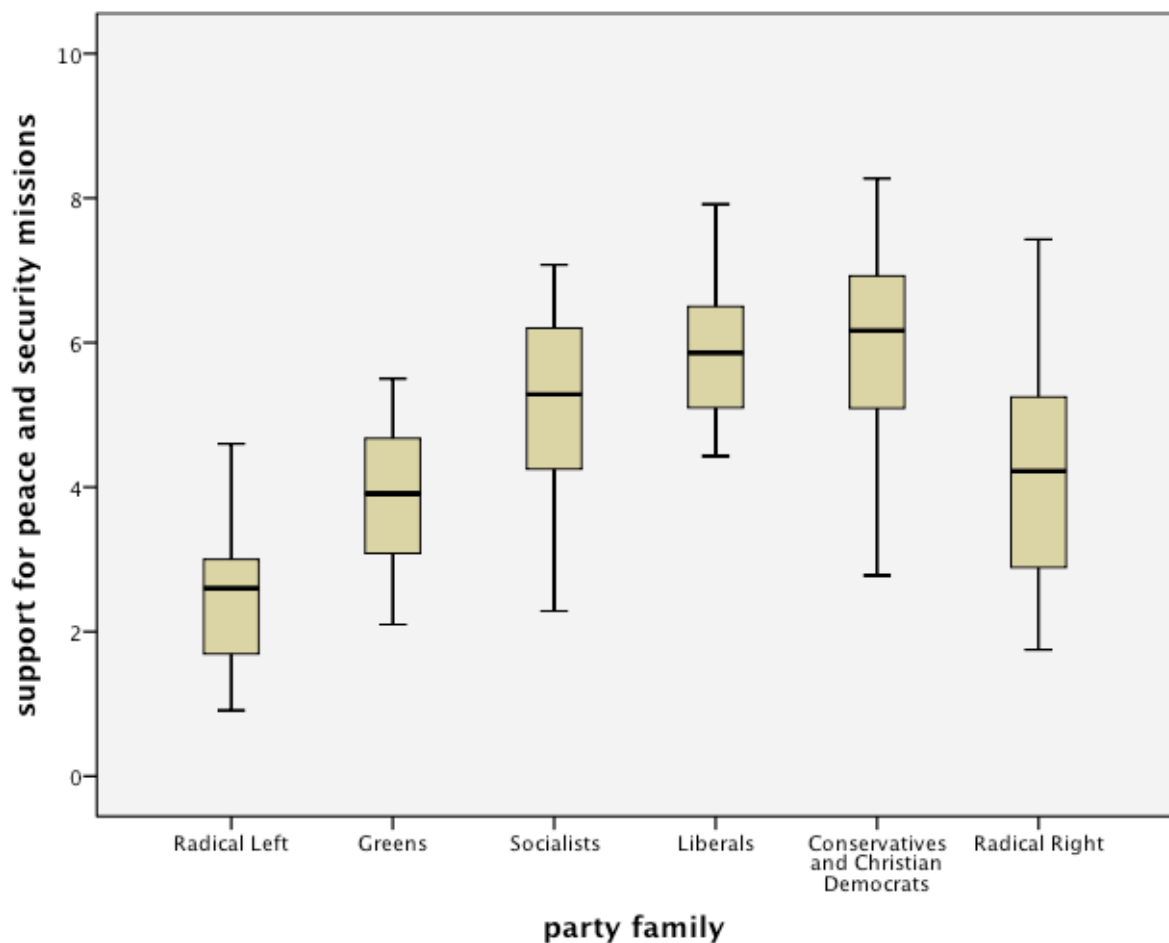


Figure 3 and Table 1 examine differences in support for military missions across the main party families. As the boxplot visualizes and the ANOVA analysis demonstrates, party families differ in the degree to which they are in favour of their country participating in peace and security missions: Conservatives/Christian Democrats and Liberal parties are most supportive whereas support is lowest among political parties of the Radical Left, followed by Green and Radical Right parties. As a party family, the Social Democrats are split right in the middle with supporters and opponents of roughly equal strength.

TABLE 1  
ANOVA ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT FOR PEACE AND SECURITY MISSIONS ACROSS PARTY FAMILIES

Family	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Radical Right	19	4.246	1.5880	1.8	7.4
Conservatives and Christian Democrats	45	6.063	1.2211	2.8	8.3
Liberal	34	5.898	.9377	4.4	7.9
Socialist	29	5.207	1.3279	2.3	7.1
Radical Left	19	2.551	1.0317	.9	4.6
Green	15	3.857	.9685	2.1	5.5

p=0.000

Taken together, political parties differ widely in their support for military missions. By and large, such differences can be well captured by the established left/right dimension. However, the correlation is curvilinear: support increases as one moves along the axis from left to right but decreases again as one nears the radical right end the spectrum. Of course, the CHES data do not allow us to determine whether differences in supporting military missions stem from the expected impact on domestic policy programs or from genuine beliefs about foreign and security policy, but they nevertheless clearly show the divide between party families.

### **Recalibrating Legislative-Executive Relations in Decision-making on the Use of Force**

Given our findings that political parties systematically differ in their support for military missions, we now examine to what extent such preferences about policy translate into preferences about procedure, namely the role of parliament in deployment decisions. The notion that support for a strong parliamentary involvement in deployment decisions first and foremost comes from opponents of military missions seems intuitively plausible. It is also in line with research in conflict studies according to which parliaments have a constraining effect on the use of force (Russett 1993: 38; Dieterich *et al.* 2015). However, explanations of parliament's role in deployment decisions have thus far ignored a party-political dimension and instead emphasized country-specific factors such as constitutional traditions, historical experiences and the security environment (Peters and Wagner 2014). For parties on the radical right in particular, constitutional preferences for a strong executive conflict with the instrumental support of parliament to constrain the deployment of troops. What is more, anecdotal evidence suggests that institutional self-interest may trump principled

considerations. US President Obama, for example, turned from a critic of Presidential authorization of force during his 2007 election campaign to an advocate once in the White House (Fisher 2012). Parties may thus similarly stand for a stronger parliament, regardless of their substantive positions on military missions. Finally, of course, a political party's position on specific procedural reforms may be influenced by being in government or in opposition.

This section examines the party politics of legislative-executive relations in decision-making on the use of force in France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. These four European members of NATO have played important roles in recent military interventions and represent different constitutional traditions, systems of government and political-strategic cultures. As described in much detail elsewhere (see Kaarbo and Kenealy 2017, Ostermann 2017 as well as Wagner et al. 2010), the role of parliament in decision-making on the use of force has been subject to debate and change in all four countries. Our aim in this section is to examine to what extent these debates were characterized by a party-political cleavage that pitted proponents of parliamentary scrutiny and control on the left against advocates of executive discretion on the right (appendix 1 provides an overview of the political parties, their vote share and their position on peace and security missions, as reported in the CHES).

Because party political contestation is often triggered by changes in the security environment or major military missions, the following section is structured around such major episodes. We first look into the debates triggered by the end of the Cold War and then discuss the aftermath of the intervention in Kosovo and, even more importantly, the 2003 Iraq War. It is important to note, however, that the effects of such events were felt unevenly across these four states. The Iraq war, in particular, triggered far more controversy over decision-making procedures in Spain and the UK, where governments decided to participate despite widespread public opposition, than in France and Germany whose governments had decided against participation. We therefore address the recalibration of legislative-executive relations in these four countries in historically defined, separate sub-sections.

### *Parliamentary War Powers at the End of the Cold War and the Challenge of Missions 'Out of Area'*

In all four countries under study, the end of the Cold War put so-called 'wars of choice' on the agenda. The US-led intervention in the Persian Gulf to end the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1991 was politically supported by all four countries, not the least because it had a clear mandate by the United Nations Security Council. At the same time, Germany's policy of

using armed force only for (collective) self-defence was challenged by calls to make a military contribution to “Operation Desert Storm”.

At the time of the 1991 Gulf War, none of the parliaments under study had the authority to participate in decision-making over such a military deployment. The German constitution required parliamentary approval for the use of force in case of an armed attack (“Verteidigungsfall”) but did not address UN-authorized military interventions. In a similar vein, the Spanish constitution required an authorization by parliament “to declare war and make peace”.<sup>6</sup> However, ‘the prior authorisation of Parliament for the declaration of war has become an empty power since combat operations are routinely practiced without this formality’ (Cortino Hueso, 2003: 741). In the UK and in France, any deployment was considered the exclusive competence of the executive (referred to as “royal prerogative” in the UK and as “*domaine réservé*” in France), although the French constitution’s article 35 also reserves the right to declare war to parliament. Nevertheless, French President Mitterrand decided to ask parliament for a vote in support of the French contribution, which took place on 16 January 1991, via the intermediary of a declaration of government which can be followed by a vote. However, it was commonly understood that this vote would not challenge the exclusive executive authority to decide military missions.

Amongst these four countries, the first major recalibration of legislative-executive relations in deployment decision-making took place in Germany. In the years following the 1991 Gulf War, the lawfulness and the political expediency of different types of missions blended into a complex debate that was almost as controversial within as among political parties. A full review of this debate is beyond the confines of this paper (for a comprehensive overview see Harnisch 2006: 235ff.). What is worth highlighting here, however, is that positions on the role of parliament indeed reflected positions on the use of force and, notwithstanding intra-party controversies, support for military missions grew towards the right of the political spectrum (with the Radical Right absent from the debate). Thus, proposals to require approval by a super-majority of two-thirds of MPs were more prominent amongst Greens (*Die Grünen*) and Social Democrats (SPD) than amongst Christian Democrats (CDU-CSU) because the latter were more permissive as regards the deployment of the *Bundeswehr* out of area. The Radical Left (*Die Linke*) was staunchly opposed to any use of armed force except for self-defence and therefore refrained from addressing procedural issues.

The 1994 Federal Constitutional Court ruling brought a preliminary end to this debate by declaring the deployment of the *Bundeswehr* ‘out of area’ constitutional. At the same time,

however, the Court referred to the *Bundeswehr* as a “parliamentary army” that may only be deployed after prior authorization by the *Bundestag*. The combination of granting the executive the competence to deploy armed forces in new ways, on the one hand, and procedurally constraining decisions to do so by introducing a parliamentary proviso, on the other hand, was crucial to build broad support for Germany’s new role in security and defence.

The Constitutional Court left the task of spelling out the details in a deployment law to the *Bundestag*. During the drafting process, the party political controversy continued along the lines mentioned above: the Green party again suggested a two-thirds majority for peace-enforcing missions. Proposals to enhance the executive’s room for manoeuvre by exempting multinational units under NATO or EU command from any parliamentary proviso were mostly made by Christian Democrats.<sup>7</sup> The Liberals (FDP) took a middle position by suggesting establishing a special committee that could decide on behalf of parliament in case of small or special forces deployments. In December 2004, the deployment law was adopted against the votes of Christian Democrats, Liberals and the Radical Left.

In neighbouring France, the developments in Germany were followed with great interest. After Mitterrand’s indirect vote on the Gulf War, the Vedel commission on constitutional change addressed issues of parliamentary powers in foreign policy for the first time, without resulting in constitutional changes though. The next major effort at reform was the report by the socialist MP François Lamy on the parliamentary control of military missions (and other defence-related issues, such as treaties, budgets etc. – Lamy 2000).<sup>8</sup> Lamy regretted parliament’s non-role in the policymaking on military operations. The large increase in number of these operations at the expense of classical inter-state war rendered the right of parliament to declare war futile (*Ibid*: 26ff., 58). Lamy deplored this state of affairs as intransparent and lacking legitimacy; it was strongly felt that parliamentary involvement could create this legitimacy (*Ibid*: 35). The socialist representative suggested a change of article 35 of the French constitution creating ‘the obligation for the executive to attain a prior *opinion* of parliament for every engagement of the French forces in operations abroad’ (Lamy 2000: 60, emphasis added) excluding evacuation missions, and a prior ‘authorisation’ (*Ibid*: 71) for all other missions without UN mandate or for those deriving from bilateral defence treaty obligations. The effort clearly aimed at reinstating strong parliamentary control in the ‘original spirit’ (*Ibid*: 61) of the declaration of war powers. The report longed for multiple avenues of parliamentary commissions and control rights (such as in-theatre information

visits, regular ministerial auditions) and overall for more participation of the sovereign's representative.

Whereas the political left followed the argumentation of its rapporteur (cf. Lamy 2000: 78ff.), especially the right wing of parliament criticized the Lamy report's far-fetching deviation from basic working principles of the Fifth Republic: dispositions entailing a prior authorisation from parliament *à l'allemande* were considered a too strong constraint on swift action by the executive. The right further feared the revelation of top-secret information to the enemy. Conversely, the Communists even wanted to extend the authorisation to all sorts of missions (*Ibid*: 81). Hence, the right way and the extent of parliamentary control were fundamentally contested, with the centre left aiming at stronger means of control than the right, and the far-left wanting to change the principle of executive prerogative completely.

Neither the UK nor Spain saw significant debates about a reform of deployment decision-making before the Kosovo War of 1999. In contrast, France and especially Germany experienced vivid debates about the role of parliament in decisions on the use of force. In line with our expectation that preferences over procedure result from preferences over policy, left parties in both countries were the main demandeurs of stronger parliamentary involvement whereas parties on the right voiced concerns about the executive's ability to effectively deploy troops.

### *The Shadow of Iraq and the Party Politics of Legislative-Executive Relations*

After several years in which troops were deployed to rather uncontroversial peace-keeping missions, NATO's 1999 Kosovo campaign and the 2003 Iraq war were highly controversial operations. In those countries that participated in the Iraq war despite strong public opposition, the intervention was followed by discussions about parliament's role in deployment decision-making. Particularly in the British case, these debates have been well documented elsewhere (see Strong 2014; Kaarbo and Kenealy 2017; Mello 2017). However, whereas most accounts treat the legislative and the executive as largely unitary actors, we pay special attention to the party-political dimension of these debates.

In Spain, debates about a new deployment law began already in the wake of NATO's 1999 bombing campaign against Serbian targets in Kosovo and Serbia. In contrast to the Gulf War and several peace-keeping and peace-enforcement missions since, the "Kosovo campaign" lacked a firm mandate by the UN Security Council and thus had a weak legitimization under international law. The Radical Left (IU), which was categorically opposed to the NATO operation, started requesting the need for parliamentary authorization.

The Socialists (PSOE) did not go as far as to defend a fully-fledged authorization procedure, but shared the criticism on the government's neglect of the parliament in defence matters (Congreso de los Diputados 1999).

However, it was the 2003 Iraq War that led all parties in opposition to request a new Law on National Defence with stronger involvement by parliament. Since the start of the US military strike on Iraq in March 2003, the left-wing opposition had repeatedly demanded that in any case where the deployment of Spanish troops to Iraq was being considered, parliament would be consulted, given the exceptional nature of the operation – a military intervention that did not have the support of the UN and that had divided the EU. However, in July 2003 the PP government deployed 1.200 soldiers to Iraq without prior debate in parliament.<sup>9</sup> The opposition strongly condemned this decision, accusing the government of having involved Spain in an illegal war against the wishes of parliament, and in the run-up to the March 2004 parliamentary election, the leader of the Socialists, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, committed to reevaluate the role of parliament in foreign military operations if he were to become the next Prime Minister (PM).

In the convoluted context created by the Iraq fiasco and the ensuing terrorist attacks in Madrid in March 2004, the PSOE won the election and launched the approval of a new Organic Law on National Defence.<sup>10</sup> Besides the requirement for *ex-ante* consultation and authorisation of troop dispatches,<sup>11</sup> the new law made it mandatory to hold an annual parliamentary debate about the development of international operations and laid down a series of conditions with which foreign missions must comply (e.g. previous approval by the UN or other international organisations in which Spain is a member). The left-right cleavage was again observable during the debate on this law. Despite being now in opposition, the Conservatives voted against the introduction of the parliamentary authorization procedure for practical reasons of efficiency and security, but also on the grounds of principled motives that this law was *de facto* questioning the executive prerogative in foreign and defence policy granted by the Constitution. Conversely, IU and other regional left-wing parties presented amendments strengthening the parliamentary powers, such as the mention to *ex-ante* authorization and stricter reporting obligations, which were finally included in the Law (Congreso de los Diputados 2005; see also Xuclà 2010).

The re-calibration of legislative-executive relations in the UK shows several similarities with the Spanish case.<sup>12</sup> Most importantly, the strengthening of parliament would be difficult to explain without reference to the 2003 Iraq War that was unpopular at the time and widely perceived as a policy failure retrospectively. As in Spain, parties on the right

(including the majority of the opposition CP) supported the intervention. In contrast to Spain (and other countries), however, large parts of the Labour Party and its PM Tony Blair in particular, were also supportive of the intervention. Like the French President in 1991, the Blair (albeit reluctantly) called parliament to vote on the deployment of troops, even though there was no obligation to do so. Although contestation over the royal prerogative (with no required approval from parliament) has a long history in the UK (Poole 2010; Joseph 2013), in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, no substantive vote on the use of military force was held after 1950 with the Korean conflict.

Significant reconsideration of the royal prerogative was prompted by the Iraq war and the decision-making process leading up to the UK's participation. Indeed, 'Blair's intransigence during 2002-2003 raised the salience of parliament's influence over military action for many MPs. The more he refused even to debate the prospect of war with Iraq, the more they demanded not just a debate but actual influence.' (Strong 2014: 6; see also Strong 2015). The UK experience in Iraq cemented a growing elite consensus that parliament should be more involved to check the executive against unpopular, unwise, and potential illegal military interventions (Eyal 2008; Kaarbo and Kenealy 2017). This elite view, was promoted across party lines. Both Gordon Brown (Labour) and David Cameron (CP) indicated their support for respective reforms, yet both refrained from real change once in office (UK Government 2007; Payne 2008; Strong 2014). During both the Blair and Brown prime ministerships, several Labour MPs introduced bills calling to formalise the role of parliament in war powers, but none progressed far.<sup>13</sup> Two inquiries by parliamentary committees on the recommended greater parliamentary oversight and control in decisions to deploy UK military (House of Commons 2004; House of Lords 2006). Conservative MPs also actively supported a stronger role for parliament, during the Brown government (Hansard 2007: 480). In 2007, conservative MP William Hague criticized Brown's government for lack of movement on the issue and introduced a parliamentary debate calling for the Iraq precedent to become a new norm (Strong 2014). Hague's motion passed with cross-party support and public pledges by MPs to follow the 'Iraq precedent', but was not binding and did not legally alter the Royal Prerogative (Strong 2014).

In contrast to the other three countries discussed here, the party-political cleavage on the question of parliament's role in the use of military force appears relatively weak in the UK. Instead, there has been a cross-party momentum to strengthen parliament's role in the wake of the 2003 decision to intervene in Iraq. The UK differs for two reasons. First, the British Labour party is more supportive of military missions than their counterparts in



Germany, Spain and France (see CHES data in the appendix). Second, the frustration over the Iraq war (under a Labour PM) has led to cross-party support for an *ex-ante* parliamentary vote (see also Kaarbo and Kenealy 2017).

*Continuing Recalibrations of Legislative-Executive Relations beyond the Iraq War*

Unpopular wars are not the only triggers for recalibrating legislative-executive relations. As we will show in this section, parliamentary war powers have remained contested in all four countries under study. In France a major recalibration took place in the context of a comprehensive constitutional reform. Debates in Germany, Spain and the UK revolved around the precise remit and status of parliamentary war powers.

In France, a large consensus on executive leadership in foreign policy relating to the commitment to being a global power has survived from the period of the Cold War (cf. Cerny 1980; Vaïsse 2009: 74ff.). What drove re-calibration in France were more general considerations of “modernizing” French democracy (Ostermann 2017). The 2005 constitutional reform commission, headed by former conservative Prime Minister Edouard Balladur (*commission Balladur*),<sup>14</sup> aimed at an overall re-evaluation of the role of parliament in the French polity and politics and stronger means for the control of the executive (*Une V<sup>e</sup> République plus démocratique* 2007).<sup>15</sup> Stating that the experience of cohabitations between the president(s) and an ideologically hostile government – as it had happened between the socialist Prime Minister Jospin and the conservative President Chirac between 1997 and 2002 – has shown that there is not enough clarity in the distribution of tasks in the *domaine réservé*, several reforms were suggested. As to the military missions, the report recommended a more timid reformulation of article 35 aiming at speedy information rights for parliament and an *ex-post* vote on the extension of operations after a three-month period (four months in the new constitution).<sup>16</sup> Hence, the president’s right as commander-in-chief and her deriving ability for proactive engagement remains untouched. Nevertheless, the role of parliament in military operations is increased and strengthened further by the greater autonomy of parliament in its overall rights to call in ministers, ask questions, and determine its agenda (cf. also Blanc 2011). The analysis suggests that the left is in favour of slightly stronger constraints and means of control, but importantly, the right wing of parliament started to favour increased means of control, too, although only those that do not limit executive room for manoeuvre. Hence, a party political cleavage remains. However, on the one hand, it is mitigated by a clear acceptance of executive lead for the sake of maintaining France’s role as a major global

security actor (Ostermann 2017), and on the other hand this cleavage meets a centre-left Socialist Party that is not principally dismissive of military missions.

In Germany, the deployment law that entered into force in 2005, has mainly been challenged by politicians of the centre-right. Already in 2006, the Christian-Democratic MP Andreas Schockenhoff argued that the deployment law was incompatible with the concept of the EU Battlegroups. Schockenhoff's call for a revision of the deployment law was seconded by the then Minister of the Interior, Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU) and Parliamentary State Secretary in the German Federal Ministry of Defence, Christian Schmidt (CSU) (*Frankfurter Rundschau* 2006; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2007). They proposed to have the Bundestag approve the deployability of the German contribution to integrated forces in advance instead of having parliament decide on specific deployments. Social Democrats and Liberals immediately rebuffed this proposal. A similar proposal was made in May 2012 by Christian Democrats Andreas Schockenhoff and Roderich Kiesewetter (Schockenhoff and Kiesewetter 2012).

Christian Democrats put this question on the agenda when they negotiated a coalition treaty with the Social Democrats in 2013. Given the opposition of the Social Democrats to any changes in the current deployment legislation, the coalition treaty stipulated the establishment of a commission that would assess how parliamentary rights can be safeguarded in the face of deepening integration within NATO and the EU (*Deutschlands Zukunft* 2013: 171). The Greens and Radical Left refused to participate in the commission as they saw no need for any changes. The commission published its report in June 2015. It suggested a couple of minor revisions to the current deployment law such as exempting officers in NATO or EU headquarters from its remit (Deutscher Bundestag 2015). Overall, the party political debate in Germany over parliament's role in decisions on the use of force fully confirms the expectation that demand for a strong legislature is highest amongst left parties and lowest amongst those of the centre-right.

In Spain, debates on the implementation of the 2005 Organic Law of National Defence also indicate the enduring relevance of the party-political cleavage. The new Law did not specify the exact procedure of authorization (e.g. whether in committee or plenary) or whether the sending of additional troops, the prolongation or modification of the operation would also require authorisation. The usual practice has been that first-time troop dispatches in an operation are authorised by the plenary, whereas the authorisations of the deployment of additional troops are dealt by the defence committee. On the nature of the deployments, parliament has frequently authorized the deployment of additional troops, but not the

prolongation or modification of the mandate. However, this is an on-going debate and certain episodes have sparked controversy. For example, in March 2012 the conservative government did not request the authorization of Parliament for the extension of the EU naval operation Atalanta against piracy off the coast of Somalia, arguing that the objectives of the mission remained unchanged. This view was challenged by the left-wing opposition, which considered that the geographical extension of the operation to include the coastal territory implied a change in the objectives (from defensive to offensive) and new risks/consequences of the intervention (e.g. the growing risk of collateral damages) and therefore, parliamentary authorization was necessary. The Socialist group even presented a non-legislative proposal in early April 2012 urging the government to request the authorization, but the PP, then holding absolute majority in parliament, rejected it. In sum, as this case illustrates, left-wing parties have continued displaying a preference for a more stringent application of the parliamentary authorization procedure than right-wing ones.

In the UK, Cameron's conservative-liberal coalition government (2010-2015) indicated willingness to, in the words of Foreign Secretary Hague, 'enshrine in law for the future the necessity of consulting parliament on military action' (Hansard 21 March 2011: col. 799). The conservative leader of the House of Commons also stated: 'We will observe the existing convention that before UK troops are committed to conflict, the House of Commons should have an opportunity to debate and vote on the matter, except when there is an emergency' (Hansard 31 January 2013: col. 1059). Cameron's decision to hold a vote on Libya, however, sent mixed messages since the vote occurred after UK participation in the airstrikes began. Frustrated MPs secured an assurance from Hague that, in future, parliament would be recalled to vote prior to any deployment (Strong 2014). During 2013, as Cameron signalled his desire to intervene in some capacity in Syria, the issue of parliament's role resurfaced. There was some confusion, however, from within the cabinet. Although Hague promised that any form of intervention, even if amounting to no more than arming the Syrian rebels, would be subject to a parliamentary vote (*The Guardian* 2013), Cameron maintained that the government reserved the 'ability to act very swiftly' and without parliamentary approval (*BBC* 2013). Testifying to the House of Lords, Deputy PM Nick Clegg indicated that 'there was a debate within Government about how to formalise and enshrine the convention. He said that he was in favour of making the convention as strong and fixed as possible, but others were more cautious' (House of Lords 2013). It was unclear if the debate was between or within parties, but given previous statements by party leaders, it was likely both.

Taken together, all four countries under study have experienced continued debates about parliament's role in deployment decision-making. These debates have had different triggers, ranging from participation in an unpopular war to multinational military integration and constitutional reform. With the exception of the UK, however, debates in the countries under study all show a pronounced left/right cleavage with the left demanding or defending a strong parliament and the right favouring executive room of manoeuvre.

## Conclusion

This article contributes to the study of legislative-executive relations in security and defence policy by adding a party-political dimension to the analysis. Contrary to the widely held assumption in international relations literature that national interests override party political visions over foreign policy, our analysis shows that support for military missions systematically differs across political parties in Europe (for a similar finding on Japan see Sakaki/Lukner 2017). However, in contrast to existing studies that assume a linear correlation between parties' position on a left/right scale and support for military missions, our analysis maintains that the relationship is curvilinear: centre-right parties are more supportive than centre-left parties, which in turn are more supportive than parties on the far left *and* the far right.

By examining debates and reforms of legislative-executive relations in France, Germany, Spain and the UK in depth, we further demonstrate that political debates over parliament's role in deployment decision-making are heavily influenced by preferences over substantive policy: as a general rule, parliamentary war powers have been demanded and defended by political parties that are rather lukewarm or sceptical about the use of armed forces. In contrast, parties who support military missions tend to advocate executive freedom and a more limited parliamentary involvement. Although the left/right cleavage in general extends to debates about legislative-executive relations, our analysis also shows that the terms of these debates differ considerably across countries. On one end of the spectrum, the German debate departs from a broad consensus that military missions require prior parliamentary approval and revolves around possible exemptions from this generally accepted rule. On the other end of the spectrum, the French debate discusses alternative forms of parliamentary involvement short of an *ex-ante* veto power. The debates in Spain and the UK are located between the French consensus about executive dominance and the German one about the armed forces as a 'parliamentary army'.

The different terms of debate are certainly no surprise to scholars of political culture and national identity. Elizabeth Kier, for example, argues that ‘we cannot just assume that all left-wing parties prefer the same policies (...) they must be understood within their cultural context’ (1997: 24). For example, ‘unlike some Left or Socialist Parties in Europe, the French Left, born in and inspired by revolution, has never been anti-militaristic or pacifistic’ (*Ibid*: 59 as well as Geis *et al.* 2013). Students of political culture, however, will have difficulties to account for the significant reforms of legislative-executive relations in some of the countries we examined.

The deployment of armed forces for purposes other than self-defence has been contested amongst political parties in European countries. Party politics is not only an essential element of the domestic politics of military missions but it also impacts the recalibration of legislative-executive relations.

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<sup>1</sup> Under the heading ‘position towards international security and peace keeping missions’, experts are asked to determine a political party’s position on a scale from 0 (‘strongly favours COUNTRY troop deployment’) to 10 (‘strongly opposes COUNTRY troop deployment’). The questionnaire refrains from any further specification in order to capture the full spectrum of military missions from classic United Nations peacekeeping to interventions without a Security Council mandate such as in Kosovo 1999 and Iraq 2003. For this article we have reversed the scale and re-coded the ‘international\_security’ variable into a *support\_mission* variable that ranges from 0 (strongly opposes) to 10 (strongly favours).

<sup>2</sup> The survey includes all (then-) EU member states plus Croatia, Norway and Switzerland but excludes Luxemburg, Malta and Cyprus. Included are political parties that obtain at least 3 percent of the vote in the national election immediately prior to the survey year or that elect at least one representative to the national or European parliament.

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion of the survey's validity and reliability see Hooghe *et al.* (2010).

<sup>4</sup> In order to map political parties' position on a left/right axis, experts are asked 'Please tick the box that best describes each party's overall ideology on a scale ranging from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right). On GAL/TAN, experts are asked: 'Parties can be classified in terms of their views on democratic freedoms and rights. *Libertarian* or *postmaterialist* parties favour expanded personal freedoms, for example, access to abortion, active euthanasia, same-sex marriage, or greater democratic participation. *Traditional* or *authoritarian* parties often reject these ideas; they value order, tradition, and stability, and believe that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues' (Bakker *et al.* 2015: 144). 0 indicates extreme GAL and 10 extreme TAN.

<sup>5</sup> In both cases, the best curve estimation is a quadratic one, which is statistically highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).

<sup>6</sup> Constitution of Spain, article 63(3).

<sup>7</sup> Then Minister of Defence Rudolf Scharping showed some sympathy for this proposal but ultimately endorsed the joint Socialist/Green proposal that took pride in not granting exceptions.

<sup>8</sup> The Lamy report contains a valuable discussion held in the defence committee, which can count as barometer for party positions.

<sup>9</sup> The government (via the Minister of Defence, Federico Trillo-Figueroa) appeared to give account of this decision in the defence committee only on 17 July 2003, despite the 31 requests of appearance that the opposition tabled since 26 March 2003.

<sup>10</sup> *Ley Orgánica 5/2005, de 17 de noviembre, de la Defensa Nacional*, BOE no. 276, 18 de November 2005.

<sup>11</sup> This prerogative has some exceptions, mainly the lack of mandatory authorisation of the missions directly related to the defence of Spain and the possibility to hold ex-post authorisation in case this was necessary for reasons of urgency (see article 17 of the Organic Law on National Defence).

<sup>12</sup> This section draws on Kaarbo and Kenealy 2016.

<sup>13</sup> The MPs Neil Gerrard, Clare Short, and Michael Meacher introduced these bills.

<sup>14</sup> The commission's official name was *Comité de réflexion et de proposition sur la modernisation et le rééquilibrage des institutions de la V<sup>e</sup> République*.

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<sup>15</sup> See also the Special Issue HS 2:5 (2008) on constitutional reform by the *Revue française de droit constitutionnel*.

<sup>16</sup> According to information obtained by the author, the four-month period has been chosen pragmatically in accordance with military necessities.

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**APPENDIX: PARTY FAMILIES AND SUPPORT FOR MILITARY MISSIONS**

Party Family	<i>Party Name (Vote Share<sup>a</sup>): Support for Military Mission<sup>b</sup></i>			
	<b>France</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>Spain</b>	<b>United Kingdom</b>
Socialists	<i>PS</i> (26.1%): <b>4.1</b>	<i>SPD</i> (23.5%): <b>5.9</b>	<i>PSOE</i> (43.7%): <b>6.6</b>	<i>Labour</i> (29.7%): <b>7.1</b>
Conservatives/ Christian Democratic	<i>UMP<sup>c</sup></i> (40.3%): <b>6.6</b>	<i>CDU</i> (27.3%): <b>7.2</b> <i>CSU</i> (6.5%): <b>7.4</b>	<i>PP</i> (40.1%): <b>6.1</b>	<i>Conservatives</i> (36.1%): <b>6.9</b> <i>UKIP</i> (3.1%): <b>4.1</b>
Liberals	<i>NC</i> (1.6%): <b>5</b>	<i>FDP</i> (14.6%): <b>6.5</b>		<i>Lib-Dems</i> (23%): <b>5.5</b>
Green	<i>EELV</i> (3.2%): <b>3</b>	<i>Die Grünen</i> (10.7%): <b>4.1</b>		<i>Greens</i> (1%): <b>2.1</b>
Radical Left	<i>PCF</i> (4.3%): <b>2.7</b> <i>PRG</i> (3.4%): <b>3.6</b>	<i>Die Linke</i> (11.9%): <b>1.9</b>	<i>IU</i> (3.8%): <b>4.1</b>	
Radical Right	<i>FN</i> (4.7%): <b>5</b> <i>MPF</i> (1.2%): <b>4.6</b>			<i>BNP</i> (1.9%): <b>5.5</b>
Regionalist Parties			<i>CiU</i> (3.1%): <b>5.7</b> <i>PNV</i> (1.2%): <b>5.1</b> <i>EA</i> (0.3%): <b>5</b> <i>ERC</i> (1.2%): <b>4.2</b> <i>BNG</i> (0.8%): <b>4.3</b> <i>CC</i> (0.6%): <b>5.5</b> <i>CHA</i> (0.15%): <b>4.7</b>	<i>SNP</i> (1.7%): <b>4.25</b> <i>PLAID</i> (0.6%): <b>3.75</b>

<sup>a</sup> Vote percentage received by the party in the national elections most prior to the year of the survey (2010), according to the Chapel Hill Expert Survey Trendfile.

<sup>b</sup> Support for peace and security missions, based on CHES.

<sup>c</sup> In a rebranding exercise, the UMP was renamed *Les Républicains* in May 2015. This article uses the former name.